

Message Text

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CINCPAC HONOLULU

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 21502

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL SONGKHLA 8 OCT 75
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SONGKHLA 176

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV THE

SUBJ: FEAR AND LOATHING IN THE PROVINCES

REF: SONGKHLA 157

SUMMARY: INSURGENCY AND CRIME HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PRESENT
IN SOUTH. LAST FEW MONTHS, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN MARKED INCREASE
IN BOTH WHICH COINCIDES WITH NADIR IN MORALE AMONG OFFICIALS.
DUE TO DRIFT AND LACK OF FIRM GOVERNMENT IN BANGKOK, SITUATION
LIKELY TO WORSEN NOT ONLY IN SOUTH BUT PERHAPS IN OTHER
AREAS OF NATION. END SUMMARY

1. WHILE RTG CONTINUES PLAY MUSICAL CHAIR WITH CABINET
RESHUFFLE RUMORS, SECURITY IN SOUTH WORSENING CONSTANTLY.
CPT IN SURAT IS STRONG AND GROWING, THROWS OUT INCREASING
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CHALLENGES TO RTG FORCES IN THAT PROVINCE (SONGKHLA 167).

CPT ALSO GROWING IN STRENGTH AND AUDACITY IN OTHER CENTRAL-SOUTHERN PROVINCES AND WE SHOULD EXPECT TO SEE MORE ATTACKS THERE. MUSLIM SEPARATISTS IN FAR SOUTH HAVE GOOD ACCESS TO GUNS AND MONEY AND REMAINED UNCHALLENGED IN MANY THEIR AREAS. EVEN MALAYSIAN COMMUNISTS (CPM) NOW OPENLY CHALLENGING RTG FORCES IN SEVERAL AREAS WHERE THEY AVOIDED CONTACT IN YEARS BACK.

2. CONCOMITANT WITH THESE THREE INSURGENCIES HITTING STRONGEST-EVER LEVELS IS RAMPANT CRIME AND CORRUPTION WHICH IS NOW WORST ON RECORD. KIDNAPPINGS EXTREMELY COMMON THROUGHOUT AREA, WITH RANSOMS OFTEN ONLY ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS. CARS ARE STOLEN AND RANSOMED FOR EVEN LESS. MALAYSIAN CONSUL INFORMS ME THAT MALAY CHINESE TOURISTS ARE NOW BEING KIDNAPPED AND RANSOMED IN HAADYAI: EVEN A GROUP OF 7 AT ONE TIME. (THAI PRESS HAS CRUSHED STORIES NOT TO HURT TOURIST INDUSTRY, BUT PENANG PAPERS REPORTEDLY CARRY DETAILS).

3. ABOVE IS OBVIOUS REASON FOR MALAISE AMONG OFFICIALS CITED REFTEL. LACK OF ORDER AND INCREASING CRIME LEAD MANY TO EITHER GO INTO SHELL AND DO NOTHING OR ELSE TO INDULGE IN EVEN MORE BLATANT CORRUPTION, SINCE PUNISHMENT IS RARELY FORTHCOMING. EASE WITH WHICH DEMONSTRATIONS AND COUNTER-DEMOS ARE ORGANIZED ALSO FRIGHTENS OFFICIALS FROM TAKING STAND. MILITARY, CIVILIAN AND EDUCATION AUTHORITIES KNOW THAT ANY FIRM STEPS TAKEN HERE MIGHT NOT BE BACKED UP BY MINISTRIES AND THEREFORE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES PREFER TO SIT ON HANDS--KNOWING THAT ROCKING THE BOAT KILLS A CAREER, AND THAT IF THEY CAUTIOUSLY SERVE THEIR PENANCE IN THE PROVINCES A TRANSFER TO BANGKOK EVENTUALLY COMES.

4. NONE OF THE ABOVE IS NEW. INDEED, IT PROBABLY DEVELOPED FROM BANGKOK'S POLICY OF MILKING AND IGNORING THE PROVINCES. SITUATION SEEMS TO HAVE GONE SO FAR NOW, HOWEVER, THAT ONLY MASSIVE INPUTS OF MEN AND MONEY AND AN ALMOST DRACONIAN HAND CAN TURN THINGS AROUND HERE. CONCERNED DECLARATIONS FROM RTG AND OCCASIONAL VISITS TO SOUTH BY MINISTERS OR THEIR DEPUTIES, ARE SEEN AS HALF-HEARTED MEASURES AND ERODE MORALE RATHER THAN HELP. THIS HIGHLIGHTED BY TAMBON COUNT

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SCHEME HERE WHEREBY RTG TRIES TO HELP IMAGE BY MAKING MONEY

AVAILABLE BUT LACK OF CONTROL ON GROUND PERMITS CORRUPTION BY LOCAL OFFICIALS, "SAME OLD STUFF", WHICH FURTHER ALIENATES.

5. WHILE SOUTH MAY HAVE UNIQUE MINORITY AND CRIME SITUATION, ABOVE MALAISE MUST BE PREVALENT THROUGHOUT COUNTRY, SINCE FEW OFFICIALS HERE ACTUALLY SOUTHERNERS AND REPRESENT GOOD

CROSS-SECTION. KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT, THEREFORE, CANNOT IN
REALITY BE AS STRONG OR EFFECTIVE AS IT APPEARS IN BANGKOK.
WORSE STILL, THESE THAI "DOMESTIC FOREIGN SERVICE" OFFICIALS
ARE CONSTANTLY TRANSFERRING AND RETURNING TO THE CAPITOL,
THEREBY INFECTING MORALE THERE AND PERHAPS EVEN LOBBYING
FOR A DRASTIC CHANGE IN THE SITUATION. BELIEVE THIS IS
NEW AND SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL PHENOMENON WHICH WE SHOULD FOLLOW,
SINCE IT COULD WELL POINT THE WAY TO FUTURE DIRECTION OF
NATION.
CASTRODALE UNQUOTE.
WHITEHOUSE

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